

SOLDIER SUMMIT, UTAH. 1776 to 1972.

On September 11, 1776 two Franciscan Priests, Father Escalante and Father Dominguez entered what is now the state of Utah and several weeks later they camped in a mountain pass in what is now called the Manti mountains and it is believed that the fathers gave the pass its first name, calling it Grassy Pass, and so it was known for many years. Captain John Fremont camped in the pass in 1843. Jim Bridger and Bill Jackson passed this way in 1846. Except for trap and a few outlaws, very few pioneers passed this way until the railroad reached the south fork of Soldier creek (starvation) in 1877. There are several different stories as to how the name was changed to Soldier Pass. In Army records dated 1860 show that the 5th regiment of infantry and three companies of the 10th infantry passed up Spanish Fork canyon, thence across the pass to the head of white river and down that stream to the green river on their way to New Mexico. At the green river a strong party was detached to return with the wagons via Spanish Fork canyon to Camp Floyd. This is the first evidence of a wagon passing up the canyon. The trail made by the soldiers moving the wagons around the Red Narrows in the canyon can still be found (1970). It is possible that some men could have died at or near Grassy Pass and buried there, but there are no records to show that this happened. There are several different stories as to how the name was changed to Soldier Pass. First and probably the one nearest to what happen is that when Johnsons army at Camp Floyd was ordered east in 1861, about forty Officers and enlisted men who came from southern states were given permission to leave the U.S. Army and go south to join the Confederate army. Two days after leaving Camp Floyd they arrived at Grass Pass in blizzard and tried to make camp in very cold weather, and that six or seven men and a fourteen year old boy were frozen to death and were buried by a spring near the summit of the pass. What happened to the rest of the party is not known. The name Grassy pass was now forgotten and the summit became known as Soldier Pass.

Another story is that when Johnsons army was on its way to Utah in 1857 and

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while it was in winter quarters at Camp Scott near Fort Bridgers, a scouting party was sent out over the Uinta Mountains and down the Green river to the old Spanish trail to try and find a route into Utah and the Salt Lake valley so that Echo canyon could be bypassed, this party never returned to Camp Scott.--- Another account of what might have happened^d was given by a Mr. Alfred L. Pace now living in Fayson, Utah(1971). Mr. Pace was born in 1884 on the old Pace ranch in Spanish Fork canyon about one mile east of Thistle, Utah. Mr. Pace's father entered^d Spanish Fork Canyon in the 1860's and located on the ranch in 1872. (the ranch is still owned by a grandson Robert Pace) The following story was told to him by his father when he was twelve or thirteen years old. In 1863 Brigham Young wanting to find a better route to southeastern Utah, sent six men from the Nauvoo Legion in Salt Lake city south to Spanish Fork city with instruction to find route up Spanish Fork canyon that would be suitable to build a wagon road through the mountains to southeastern Utah, Because of unfriendly Indians living around the hot springs a short distance up the canyon only heavy armed troops could travel this part of the canyon, so the legion men were sent up the old Indian trail through Payson Canyon and down Bennie creek (part of this old trail can still be found), and on into Spanish Fork Canyon where they met John A. L. Pace, who agrees to guide them up the canyon to Grassy Pass. The next morning Pace along with a friendly Indian and the Legion men started up the canyon, following a old Indian trail around the red narrows to the mouth of Sheep Creek where they made camp after dark. About two hours later a small dog of Pace's began to growl and the horses acting very restless. It was thought that hostile Indians were near so it was decided to break camp and try to slip away up the canyon. As they moved out it started to snow covering their tracks. Arriving at the head of the canyon at daybreak and with six inches of snow on the ground, camp was made and the party rested that day. A nearly start was made the next morning, following the mountain ridges south by late evening they came to Grassy pass and camped that night. This was as far as Mr. Pace had agreed to go and it

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was thought that the Legion men could make their way south by following the White river. The storm was fast turning into a blizzard so Mr. Pace and the Indian started back down the canyon following the trail they had made the day before, arriving back at their camp near the mouth of Thistle creek in two days. Some time later six men were found frozen to death at the spring in Grassy Pass. It was not known who found and buried the men or if they were the same ones that Pace guided to the pass. This is all that Alfred Pace could remember of the story that his father told him when he was a small boy. Mr. Pace is eighty-nine years old (1972).

The writer has listened to several more stories as to how the graves happened to be in the pass, but facts to backup the the stories are so few that they are not worth repeating. It is said that at one time the graves had a headboard. There was a fence around the graves made of wood, now in 1972 all that can be seen is a few rotten boards, a faint outline of four graves with a small stone at one end, and three other stones that appear to be markers. No one has cared for the graves for many years.



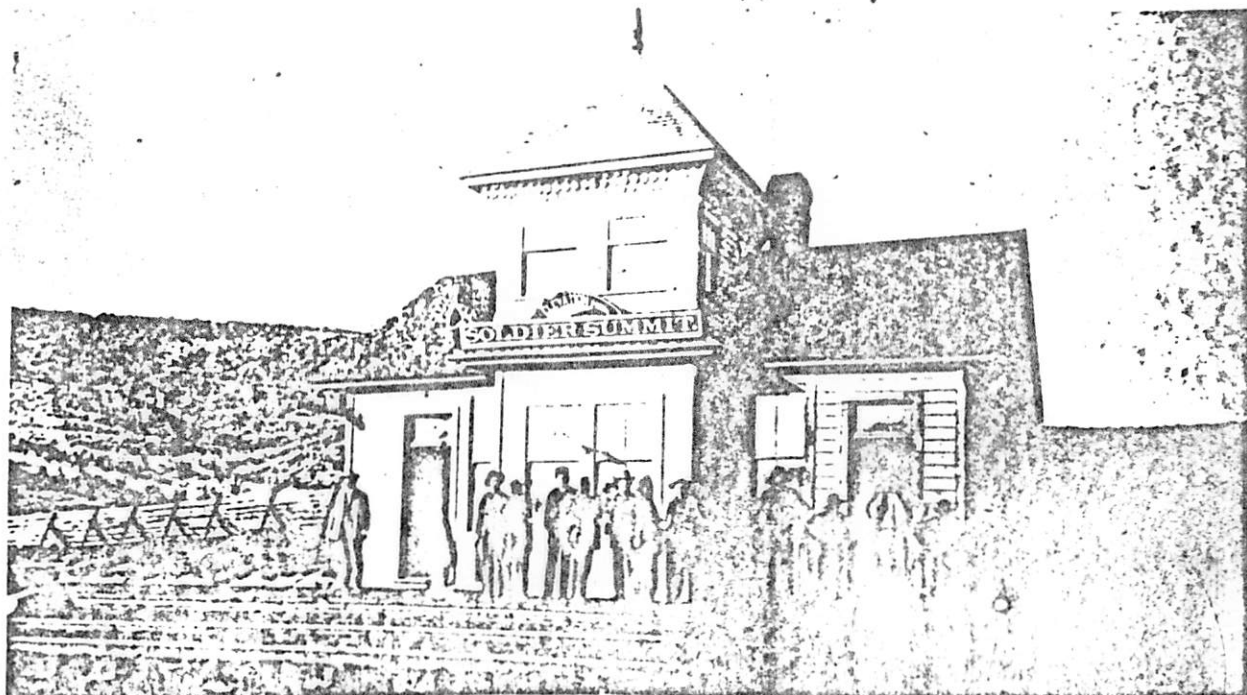
Wm J. Pace

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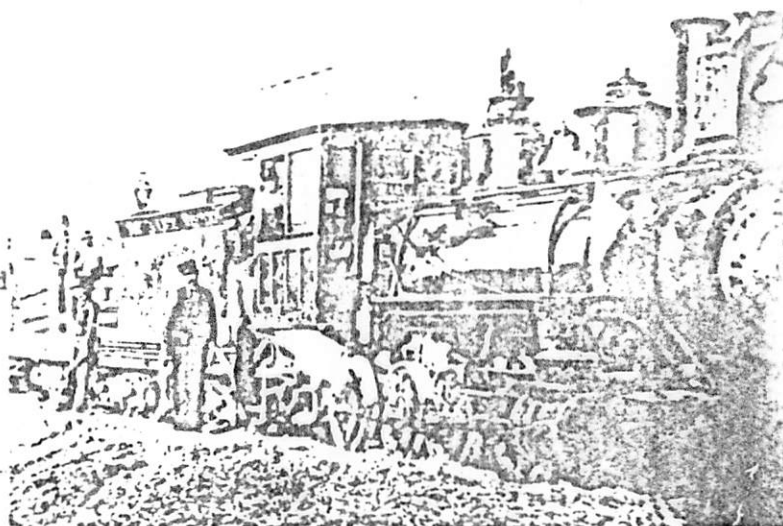
SOLDIER SUMMIT, Building the railroad over the summit.

About 1872 Milan Fackard of Springville, Utah discovered the coal fields in Pleasant Valley (now called Scofield) and organized The Utah and Pleasant Valley railroad company. Early in the spring Of 1874 the surveyers Smith and Doremus had located a line for the new company and grading was started, commencing one mile west of Springville, the track entered town on west Center and turned south on State street and thence to Spanish Fork canyon. It was a narrow gauge railroad. By mid-summer the track had reached the mouth of the canyon and by fall the rails were layed to the construction camp at the mouth of Thistle creek. 1875 saw the road completed to Mill Fork where a large saw-mill was in operation sawing out ties for the new railroad. The first pay-load of frieght was ten car-loads of ties shipped to the Utah Central railroad. Many more were to follow. Early the next spring the tracks reached the forks of Soldier creek where the town of Tucker was to be. Turning up the south fork of Soldier creek (now called Starvation) the road was built up the canyon passing over the summit about twenty miles west of Soldier Pass, entering the Pleasant Valley coal fields and the town of Scofield was born. In 1880 the little railroad taken over by the Rio Grande Western railroad company The track from Tucker was taken up and relayed up the left fork of Soldier creek to Soldier Pass and on east to meet the Denver and Rio Grand near the state line. The first time table of the railroad listed the the Passas Soldier Summit, and that is how Soldier Summit got its name. A small depot was built that fall, the railroad workers spent the first winter in tents.

Don Jeffers



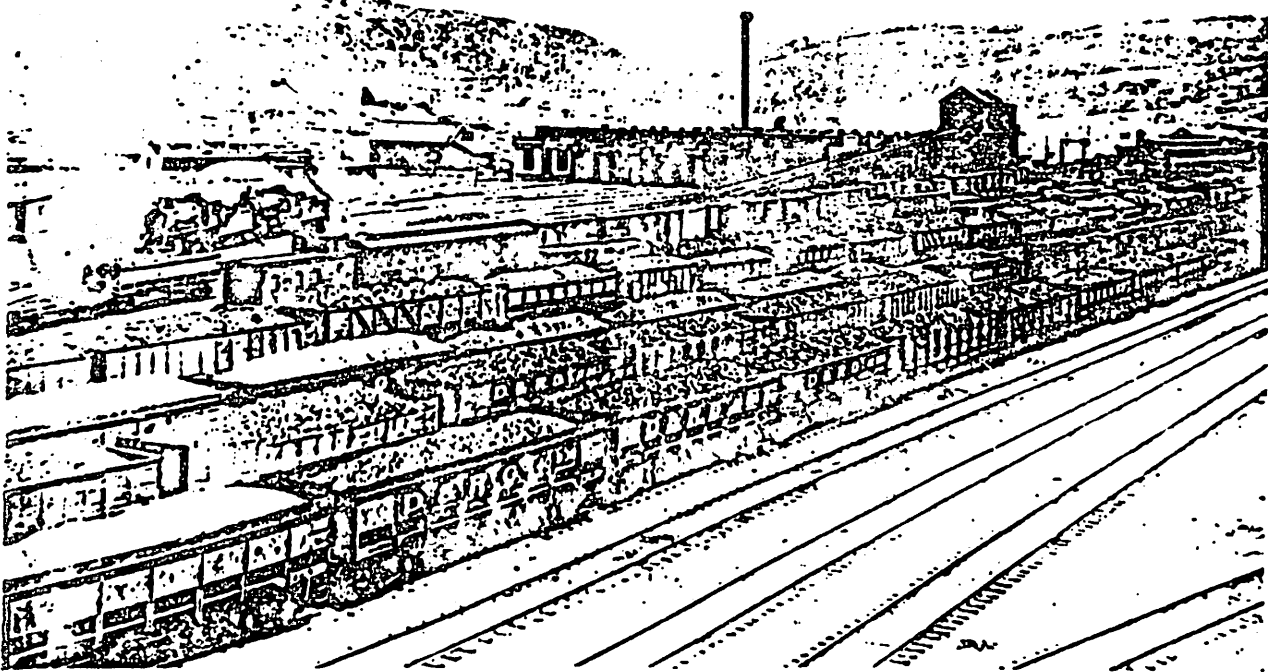
Soldier Summit's first depot taken in 1883, The road was narrow gauge. In 1881 The Rio Grande Western and the Denver and Rio Grande railroad rails met at a point near the Utah and Colorado state line, and Soldier Summit was on a main line narrow gauge railroad that started in Denver Colo. and ended in Ogden, Utah. The town started to grow slowly at first but as business grew on the railroad so did Soldier Summit. In 1890 the railroad changed over to standard gauge track and a new depot was built along with a larger engine house and some housing for employees. By 1900 the population of the town was over four hundred and the town built a new Jail (it is still standing). A Latter-Day Saints and a Community Church came to town. Teancum Pratt was the first LDS Bishop, and three new Saloons opened for business. A Mr. Peterson started a dairy west of town, He also owned a general store and a bakery in town, Parley Billes ran the showhouse and a lumber yard. A Mr. Goodran was the town Druggist with a first class drugstore, Clyde Nason was postmaster,



Norm Jeffers

Soldier Summit, continued.

Roy Morrison run a general store, Bill Feterson a blacksmith shop and the first garage in town. There were two barber shops in town, the barbers names were a Mr. Munk and Mr. Jones. The nightlife and gambling of the town was mostly taken care of by Andy Papus. The depot agents name was Best and in 1929 a fine new depot was built by the railroad, it was two stories high with a Doctor and Dentist office upstairs. By 1919 a large mine was in operation mining Ozocerite, It was called the wax mine and employed a average of 150 men in the mine and mill. The town was now important to the enconomy of Utah. In 1918 The railroad now known as The Denver & Rio Grande Western decided to make Soldier Summit the place for their main repair shops for helper locomotives used on the long grades on both sides of the summit and a sub-divison point between Grand Junction and Sajt Lake City. A new large engine-house and machine shop capable of servicing thirty locomotives every twenty-four hours. A large water treatment plant was built and water piped in from the White river. Over one hundred new homes were built for use of railroad employes. A new Commissery and a Gymnasium was also built for the railroad workess. The county built a new and larger school to teach all twelve grades.



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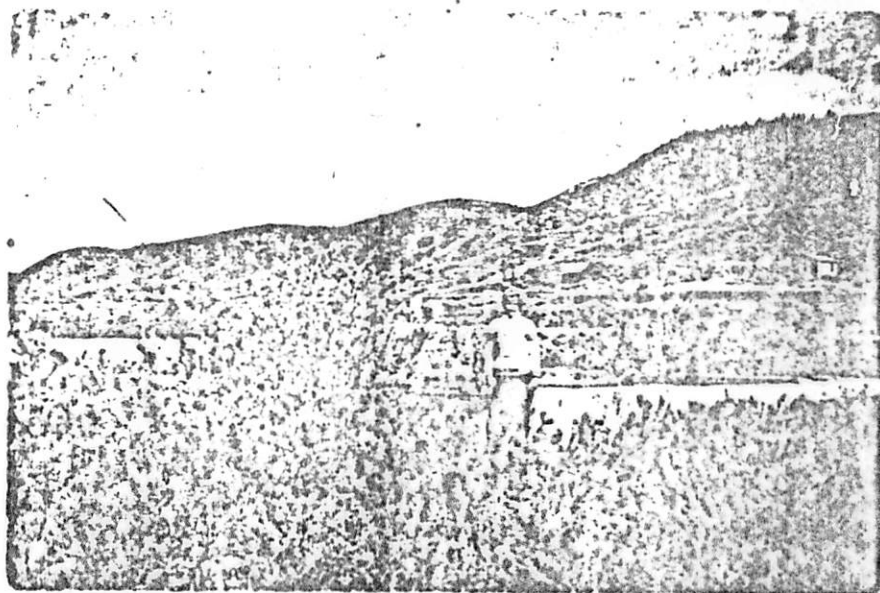
1918 to 1929 was a very prosperous time for the town. It was a good place to live with plenty of work for anyone will to work and good hunting and fishing all around in the mountains.

In 1929 the railroad decided that it had made a mistake in locating on top of the mountains and started moving all their shops and the servicing of trains to Helper and Thistle and most of the employees were transferred. The enginehouse and machine shop were torn down and moved and nearly all housing built by the railroad was sold and moved away. About this time the Wax mine closed down and with the coming of the Diesel Locomotive and central train control all railroad employees were moved away.

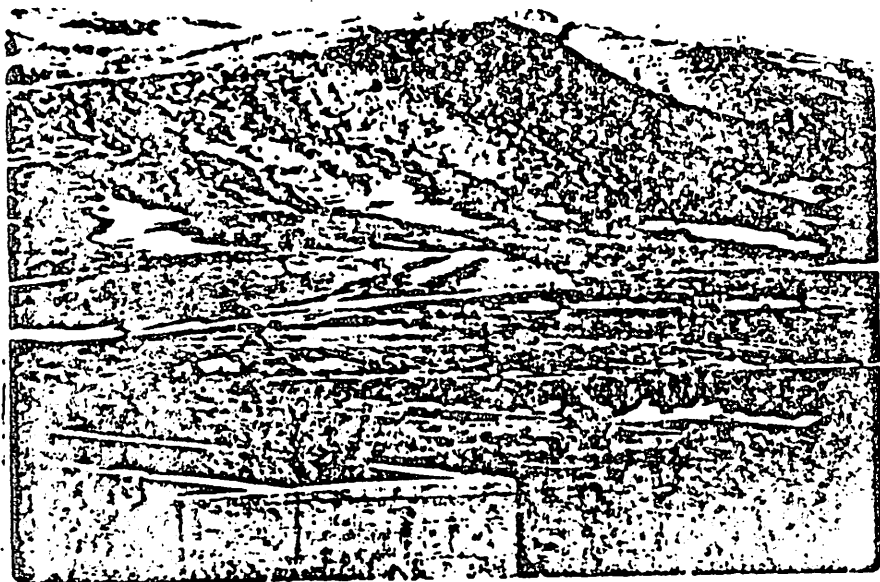
There is not much left of the town now. It is not quite a ghost town as highway 50 and 6 passes through and a few tourist stop. There is a good motel, A first class Cafe, A excellent Bar and a Service Station. The old Jail is still standing and is interesting to visit. The soldiers graves are hard to find without a guide. The old town is a interesting place to visit if one will take time to cross the railroad tracks where he can see all the old foundations of the town and try to find the graves from which the town got its name.

For the names of the old timers used in this story of Soldier Summit I am very much indebted to Mrs Robert Pace of Thistle, Utah who lived and went to school in the old town.

1972- Mrs. Robert Pace is standing by the foundation of the home where she lived as a girl and went to school while living here. This was close to the center of town. The old jail is in the background.

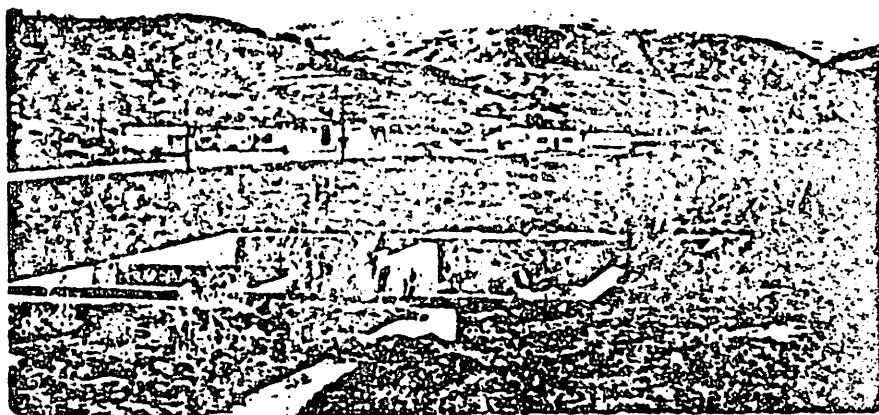


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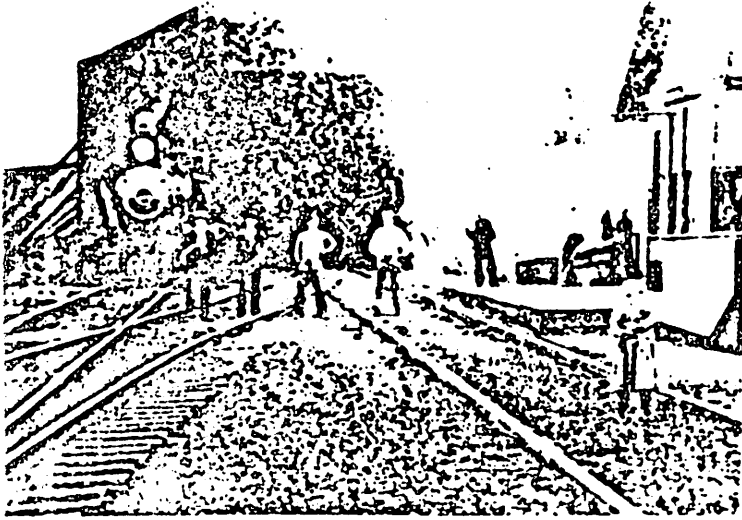


1972- Picture taken from about the middle of the old residential part of town and looking south at the old engine-house and machine shop foundations with the stock yards in the distance.

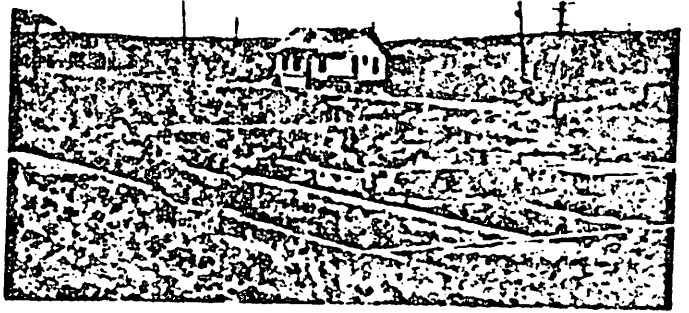
1972- The present town of Soldier Summit along with row of old railroad housing foundations. All the houses were sold by the railroad and moved away, many to Helper, Price, Thistle, Spanish Fork and a few to Springville.



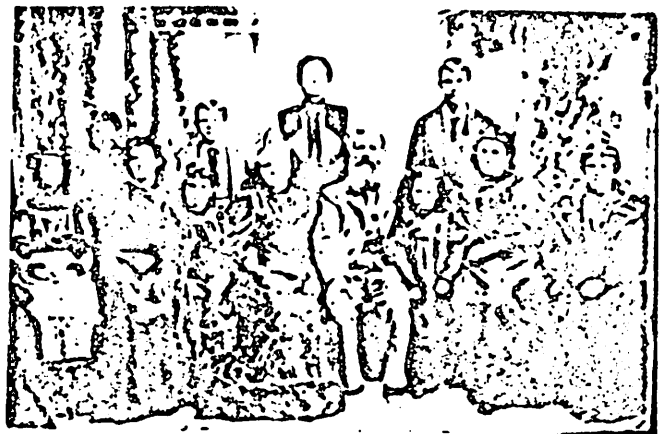
Don J. Jones



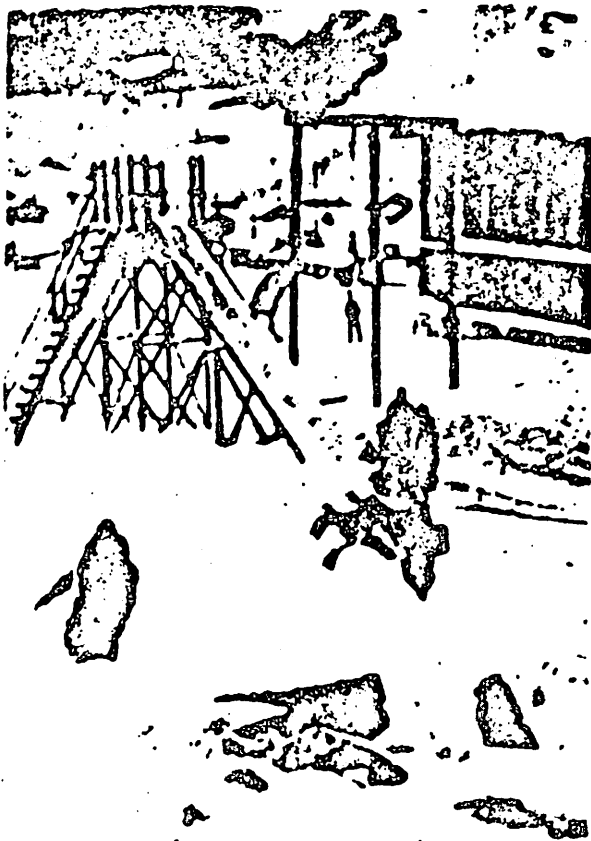
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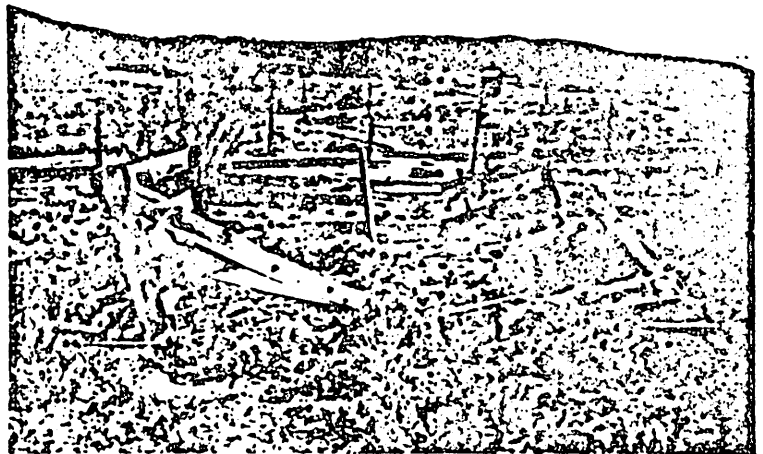
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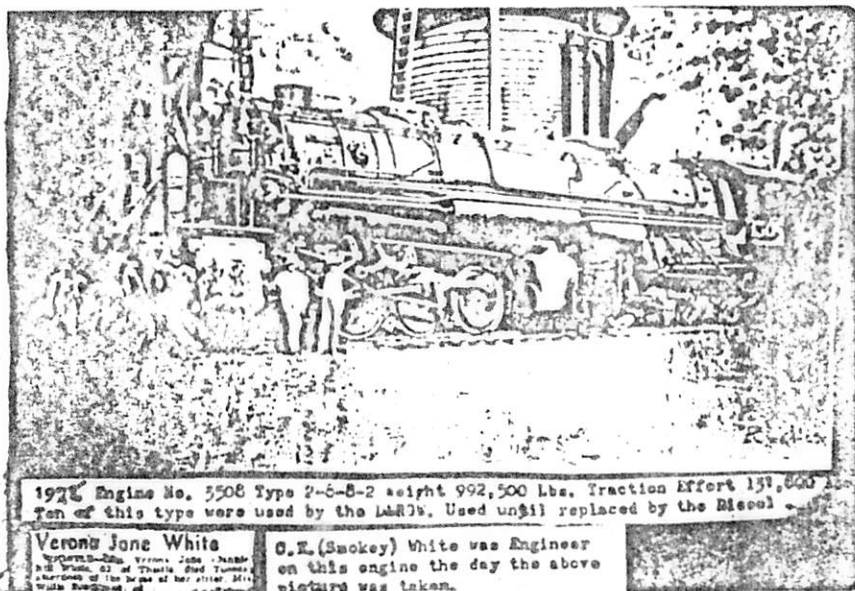
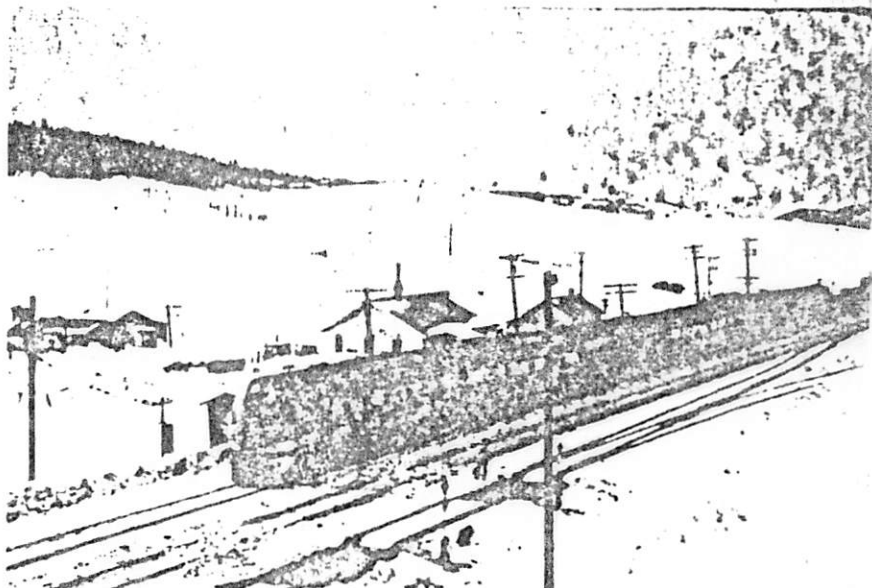


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5- The second school in town it was closed in 1945 and torn down in 1950.

1- The second Depot built in Soldier Summit 1881 when the track was changed to standard gauge. 2- Foundation of Depot built in 1919. 3- First Bishop of Soldier Summit, Teencum Pratt, 1896-1900. 4- Old city cemetery, no one remembers who is buried here,

1954- A heavy freight train arriving at the Summit, eastbound. The railroad was all diesel now. The building shown here are all gone now and no railroad employee lives in Soldier Summit anymore.



1928-C.E. White, D&RGW engineer for many years lived in Soldier Summit for ten years, transferred to Thistle in 1930. This type of Locomotive was used as a helper engine on the D&RGW for many years until replaced by the Diesel.

1965
The old City jail at Soldier Summit is still standing and is worth a short visit if one has a few moments to spare. There is a service station, a good bar and a restaurant near by.

